

[US NABCI Committee](#)[How We Work](#)[Bird Conservation Community](#)

[Resources](#)[Funding](#)[International](#)

Bird Conservation Regions

What are the primary purposes of BCRs?

Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) are ecologically distinct regions in North America with similar bird communities, habitats, and resource management issues. BCRs are a single application of the scale-flexible hierarchical framework of nested ecological units delineated by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). The CEC framework comprises a hierarchy of 4 levels of ecoregions. At each spatial level, spatial resolution increases and ecoregions encompass areas that are progressively more similar in their biotic (e.g., plant and wildlife) and abiotic (e.g., soils, drainage patterns, temperature, and annual precipitation) characteristics. BCRs may be partitioned into smaller ecological units when finer scale conservation planning, implementation, and evaluation are necessary. Conversely, BCRs may be aggregated to



Wilson's Warbler · Photo by: Nick Hajdukovich

facilitate conservation partnerships throughout the annual range of a group of species, recognizing that migratory species may use multiple BCRs throughout their annual life cycle. BCRs also facilitate domestic and international cooperation in bird conservation because these areas of relatively homogenous habitats and bird communities traverse state, provincial, and national borders.

How were BCRs developed?

A mapping team comprised of members from United States, Mexico, and Canada assembled at the first international NABCI workshop held in Puebla, Mexico, in November 1998, to develop a consistent spatial framework for bird conservation in North America. After agreeing on general principles and considering numerous ecoregion delineations, they adopted CEC's hierarchical framework of nested ecological units. The team's US members met in December of that year in Memphis, Tennessee, to apply the framework to the United States and developed a proposed map of BCRs. BCRs were created by aggregating CEC level II, III, and IV ecoregions in combinations that reflect current understanding of bird species distribution and life history requirements. The map was presented to and approved by the US NABCI Committee during its November 1999, meeting. The map is a dynamic tool. Its BCR boundaries will change over time as new scientific information becomes available. It was originally expected that the map would be updated every three years, but a review process was not initiated until 2009, with the last updates occurring in 2014.

What are the primary purposes of BCRs? The primary purposes of BCRs, as proposed by the mapping team in 1998 and approved in concept by the US Committee in 1999, are to:

- facilitate communication among the bird conservation initiatives;
- systematically and scientifically apportion the US into conservation units;
- facilitate a regional approach to bird conservation;
- promote new, expanded, or restructured partnerships; and
- identify overlapping or conflicting conservation priorities.

As integrated bird conservation progresses in North America, Bird Conservation Regions should ultimately function as the primary units within which biological foundation issues are resolved, the landscape configuration of sustainable habitats is designed, and priority projects originate.

Download BCR layers and maps.

For more information on the ecological framework and the philosophy behind the development of BCRs, download the following document:

A Proposed Framework for Delineating Ecologically-based Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation Units for Cooperative Bird Conservation in the US

For more information on BCRs and their relationship to Joint Ventures, download the following document: [BCRs and JVs: Evolving Roles for Bird Conservation Delivery](#)

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The U.S North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Committee is a forum of government agencies, private organizations, and bird initiatives helping partners across the continent meet their common bird conservation objectives.	Integrated Bird Conservation History Membership Meetings Subcommittees Governance All Bird Bulletin	Communications Coordinated Messaging and Advocacy Executive Council Human Dimensions International Monitoring Private and Working Lands State of the Birds Unified Science Team	Judith Scarl US NABCI Coordinator Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 1100 First Street NE Washington, DC 20002 202-838-3475 jscarl@fishwildlife.org
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